
News Release

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SCAG: Congestion Pricing and Go Zones Effectively Reduce Congestion, Average Commute Times; Pilot Project Urged to Further Test Concept

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) today urged creation of a pilot project to test the concept of Mobility Go Zones in reducing congestion and improving air quality.

The proposal, part of SCAG's newly released Mobility Go Zone Program Feasibility Study, would establish pilot Go Zones on the Westside of Los Angeles to more deeply analyze the effectiveness of congestion pricing, enhanced pedestrian infrastructure and improved transit options.

The concept of congestion pricing has gained momentum in recent years as part of a package of solutions to reduce both the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the region and the amount of time motorists spend in their cars. Last year, a SCAG study showed that Southern Californians are stuck in traffic an average of 128 hours per year.

When you add up lost productivity, wasted fuel and vehicle wear and tear, congestion costs the average motorist \$2,000 a year. That doesn't include the cost of being away from family, the stress and anxiety of being stuck in traffic or the broader health impacts of congestion-related vehicle emissions.

"Congestion is one of the biggest challenges we face as a region. It impacts our economy, our ability to produce jobs and a quality of life. And while there has been a lot of talk about congestion pricing as a solution, this study puts some real numbers to it," said Alan D. Wapner, President of SCAG.

The feasibility study released today showed that a Go Zone would reduce VMT by 21% and vehicle hours traveled (VHT) by 24% during peak travel times. A more even distribution of trips throughout the day would reduce overall VMT by 8% and VHT by 10% for the average motorist. In addition, it is anticipated that the pilot Go Zones would save \$4 million per year in reduced greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and generate a net average of \$69.2 million a year in revenues, which would go directly toward transportation improvements, pedestrian amenities and economic development.

Congestion pricing is a key part of the Go Zone concept and creates a variable fee structure for motorists based on the time of day they're driving. Additional elements include enhanced pedestrian

infrastructure, local bus circulator routes, express commuter buses, bike sharing and other enhanced active transportation services to increase mobility options for commuters, visitors and residents alike.

“We can’t sit on our hands, hoping congestion will magically resolve itself,” said Amanda Eaken, Director of Transportation and Climate at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). “The situation we’re in now – with commuters losing over 100 hours of their lives a year to traffic – is unacceptable. This study takes a serious look at ways to give people back their time while also cutting air and climate pollution.”

“A Go Zone is the fairest approach to reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions,” said Darin Chidsey, Executive Director of SCAG. “The pricing model means that people who contribute the most to traffic will pay the most. And for low-income communities, who are often the most harmed by congestion, improved traffic flow and new transit investments will be a huge benefit.”

“Communities around the state are calling for creative ways to address congestion and improve mobility. It’s time for the state to heed that call,” said Assemblymember Richard Bloom, of Santa Monica. “We have seen congestion pricing work around the world and this report shows us that it can work in California’s beleaguered cities, as well. I hope to facilitate ‘Go Zones’ with legislation allowing for a small number of locally determined pilot projects that provide measurable community benefits.”

Said Brian D. Taylor, Director of the UCLA Institute of Transportation Studies, “When properly designed and implemented, road pricing makes all of our transportation systems work better; it can drastically reduce traffic delays and make formerly congested areas more appealing and healthier places to live, work, and play.”

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation’s largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and nearly 19 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG’s regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.